

New Sight Incorporated in M1A2 (SEP) Tanks Improves Lethality...and Survivability

The Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command recently rolled out an improved model of the M1A2-series tank that includes a new-generation thermal sight. The System Enhancement Package (SEP) M1A2s include a 50-power sight magnification that will allow more accurate target acquisition at long ranges, compared to the present 10-power systems. The sighting system will allow both gunners and tank commanders to acquire targets faster and at greater range than current systems.

A problem identified in the Gulf War was that the M1's gun could kill targets at a greater range than the tank's sights could acquire them clearly. This may have been a factor in several fratricide incidents.

Key to the M1's survivability in that conflict was its ability to fight the enemy at "stand-off" range; in other words, the U.S. tank could acquire and kill Iraqi T-72s and T-55s before these tanks could see the M1s, and the M1's gun was accurate at far greater ranges.

The armor package on the SEP tanks, utilizing depleted uranium, has been upgraded to improve protection, and the tanks will also be capable of communicating digitally with other battlefield systems using the new



Embedded Battle Command digital communication system. This system will permit an M1 crew, for example, to cue an artillery system with an accurate digital call for fire.

SEP includes color monitors, an improved navigational system, a digital mapping system, an under-armor auxiliary power unit, along with better climate control.

The SEP upgrades will be applied to all M1A2s beginning in Fall 2000. Ultimately, SEP will be installed in 1,174 of the active Army's 2,685 tanks.

